Determining Nietzsche's *Freedom* of the Will

Senior Honors Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment
of requirements to graduate from
The Honors Program

by

Christina Shaheen Moosa

Sweet Briar College
Sweet Briar, Virginia 24595
Spring, 2007

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Introduction

In this thesis I have taken up one of the most complicated and contested topics in current Nietzsche scholarship. The question of how Nietzsche manages to salvage some concept of freedom, or sovereignty, after providing a devastating critique of the philosophical concepts of freewill and determinism is a point of contention in current Nietzsche studies. This project originated two summers ago, while conducting summer research on questions surrounding freewill and determinism in contemporary philosophy. I was driven to study these topics by an ever-growing interest in philosophical interpretations of human nature. I have been particularly interested in the portrait of human nature that Friedrich Nietzsche offers in his *Genealogy of Morals*. Last summer, I continued my research by conducting an Honors Summer Research Project on Nietzsche's critique of Christian morality. These research projects fostered in me an interest in Nietzsche's philosophical works regarding freewill, determinism, and sovereignty.

The following work is an attempt to articulate Nietzsche's critiques of freewill and determinism, while demonstrating how his concept of sovereignty is compatible with those critiques. The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents Nietzsche's critique of the metaphysical concepts that surround the notion of freewill; it focuses on his arguments against incorrect metaphysical assumptions inherent to the will, consciousness, and the "self". Chapter two tracks Nietzsche's argument against the moral and religious concept of freewill. Here, I examine his destructive critique of the moral initiatives that have guided the development of the notion of freewill. Nietzsche examines the development of the concept using a genealogical approach and critiques it based on

its life-denying consequences. He believes that freewill is a mechanism used by slave moralists in order to impose moral responsibility, guilt, and bad conscience onto human beings. Having analyzed Nietzsche's critique of freewill, I turn in chapter three to an evaluation of Nietzsche's arguments against the metaphysical notion of determinism. In this chapter it becomes obvious that although Nietzsche critiques freewill, he cannot be portrayed as a simple determinist. Nietzsche critiques the "unfree will" as harshly as the concept of freewill; he also rejects the metaphysical concepts associated with determinism for being reductively atomistic and life-denying. Taking into account Nietzsche's rejection of freewill and determinism, the final chapter explicates Nietzsche concept of freedom, or sovereignty, within his affirmative morality. This capacity for sovereignty is exemplified in Nietzsche's discussions of figures such as Zarathustra, Goethe, and the Übermensch. The ultimate aim of the thesis is to understand how Nietzsche's concept of sovereignty is compatible with his critiques of freewill and determinism.

Nietzsche's development of an affirmative morality based on life-affirmation and the capacity for sovereignty is based on compassion for human beings and a desire on his part to change the state of the world around him. In a passage entitled, "*My kind of pity*," Nietzsche describes the urge that launches his critique of morality. He states, "This [pity] is a feeling for which I find no name adequate: I sense it when I see precious capabilities squandered. . . . Or when I see anyone halted, as a result of some stupid accident, at something less than he might have become" (*WP*, 367). Nietzsche's sense of compassion is very different from the compassion associated with traditional morality, which privileges a compassion based on life-denial. Nietzsche's compassion leads him instead

toward a complete revaluation of the moral systems that have produced life-denying consequences. His critique of Judeo-Christian morality and the creation of his affirmative morality are best exemplified in his short parable, "On the Three Metamorphoses" (*TSZ*, I). Here, Nietzsche depicts the history of humankind developing in three stages: the camel, the lion, and the child. The camel carries the weight of morality on his back. Concepts like freewill and determinism weigh him down and his existence is utterly life-denying. The lion resists morality and life-denial, and this character voices the pessimism and criticism that calls the concepts of freewill and determinism into question. Nietzsche states, "the creation of freedom for oneself and a sacred 'No' even to duty—for that, my brothers, the lion is needed." Nietzsche's lion is indicative of the impetus behind the critiques of moral concepts I will examine in the opening chapters. Last, Nietzsche offers the concept of the child, who epitomizes his affirmative morality and belief in sovereignty. He explains, "the child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, as sacred 'Yes.' For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred 'Yes' is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world" (*TSZ*, I: "On the Three Metamorphoses"). The child, for Nietzsche, epitomizes life-affirmation and is sovereign and capable of willing his own will. This parable articulates a literary portrait of the progression of Nietzsche's critique of life-denying morality toward the development of an affirmative morality.

Nietzsche's critique of morality and freewill extends across many of his texts. In studying how Nietzsche critiques the metaphysical and moral notions of freewill, one can gain a better understanding of his philosophical position on sovereignty and life-

affirmation. Though the concept of sovereignty involves a capability to direct one's own will, I will argue that the concept is not necessarily incompatible with a critique of the autonomous agency of freewill. The following chapter begins this examination of Nietzsche's position on the issues surrounding freewill, determinism, and sovereignty, starting with a critique of the metaphysical concepts that surround the notion of freewill.

Chapter One

The question of whether human beings can act freely is a perplexing question that dominates contemporary philosophical debate in both metaphysics and ethics. Freewill and determinism are two philosophical concepts that claim to explain how human action is caused. The concept of freewill includes the position that human beings have the ability to direct their actions autonomously and are therefore causes of their own actions. The determinist view is contrary to the position that humans can direct their actions autonomously, and is characterized by the position that human beings do not have the capacity to freely direct their actions. The determinist viewpoint includes the idea that human action is a product of biological, psychological, and/or environmental forces that determine how a human being acts in a specific situation. The discourse surrounding freewill and determinism raises two important issues. The first issue at stake is a metaphysical question about the cause of actions; the second issue is a moral one and concerns the place of moral responsibility in the absence of freewill (Weatherford, 292). In this discussion of freewill, or human agency, we will analyze Nietzsche's argument against the metaphysical notion of freewill (Chapter 1) and then turn to his critique of moral responsibility in Christian thought (Chapter 2).

Nietzsche's positions on freewill and determinism are ambiguous. Many of his writings on the issue defend a position that appears to be strongly deterministic; but he seems also to believe in the possibility of a self-creating and autonomous human will. In this chapter I attempt to show how these two seemingly incompatible philosophical positions in Nietzsche's work are in fact compatible; I further argue that reading

Nietzsche as a compatibilist provides a unique perspective on the current freewill-determinism debates.

Before launching into an examination of Nietzsche's critique of the concept of freewill, and more specifically his critique of the Christian moral concept of freewill, it is important to gain a sense of what "will" signifies in common philosophical thought and how Nietzsche's ideas on how the will functions are radically different from the tradition that precedes him. The will is traditionally "taken to be a mental faculty responsible for acts of volition such as choosing, deciding, and initiating motion" (Weatherford, 910). This common concept of the will includes an autonomous aspect, hence the notion of freewill. The will is often viewed as a product of the mind or self; and the entity who is responsible for the willing, whether it is a mind or soul, is considered to be able to act freely and of its own volition. Nietzsche radically rejects the traditional notion of freewill:

> The individual is a piece of fate from top to bottom, one more law, one more necessity for all that is to come and will be. Telling him to change means demanding that everything should change, even backwards. . . . And indeed there have been consistent moralists who have wanted man to be different, namely, virtuous; they want him to be in their image, namely miseryguts: to which end they *denied* the world! (*TI*, V: 6)

This passage introduces us to Nietzsche's determinism and his rejection of moral conceptions of the human will. Here, Nietzsche the determinist *qua* fatalist tells us that human beings are products of fate and that their actions are a result of deterministic forces; he also objects to the moral aspects of the concept of freewill. Much of Nietzsche's critique of Christian morality is dedicated to this rejection. He believes that the moral inclination toward being virtuous promotes life-denial, and this belief is linked to his critique of the concept of freewill.

Another major portion of Nietzsche's critique of the metaphysical notion of freewill revolves around his denial of human agency. Nietzsche refutes the views that human beings are the only active agents and that people are completely autonomous. He attacks the metaphysical conception of freewill by arguing against the existence of human agency. The traditional idea that human beings are autonomous agents is characterized in many ways. The existence of agency often incorporates the belief in humans as *causa sui*, and the belief that humans have a capacity to "will".

The metaphysical notion of freewill also includes the notions that human beings have the ability to see the world transparently through conscious thought, and that they are capable of self-consciousness. These four characteristics all represent the different ways in which human agency is viewed and solidified in the Western metaphysical tradition of philosophical thought. Nietzsche critiques human agency by tackling each of the four concepts described above. Each of these critiques serves to dismantle the metaphysical notion of freewill, as well as further distinguish Nietzsche as a determinist.

The first metaphysical idea listed above that contributes to the notion of human agency is *causa sui*. This term is used in order to explain the idea that individuals, or even God, can be considered "causes of themselves". In the case of God, it would mean that he is self-created and thus the initial cause of the universe. In reference to the individual, being *causa sui* would mean that an individual is the cause of his or her own actions. Nietzsche rejects the idea that individuals are self-creating in stating that "the *causa sui* is the best self-contradiction that has been conceived so far, it is a sort of rape and perversion of logic" (*BGE*, 21). This statement characterizes Nietzsche as a determinist, because in rejecting the idea of *causa sui*, he is admitting his belief that

individuals are not self-creating, and that their actions are a product of deterministic forces. He explains the reasoning for the development of the contradictory concept of *causa sui* by introducing this concept's relationship with freewill. For Nietzsche, "the desire for 'freedom of the will' in the superlative metaphysical sense, the desire to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for one's actions oneself, and to absolve in God . . . involves nothing less than to be precisely this *causa sui*" (*BGE*, 21). The belief in individuals being completely free to create and decide upon their actions is an impossibility for Nietzsche. As Richard White explains, Nietzsche "argues without qualification that the traditional postulate of freewill in the 'superlative metaphysical sense' is a logical contradiction of the most blatant sort, so that in spite of every familial or social determination, one is responsible for what one becomes" (White, 131). Ignoring the role that deterministic forces, such as our biological and psychological dispositions, play in determining one's actions would lead to erroneous conclusions, according to Nietzsche. He believes that "our 'will' is an artefact of the facts about us, and thus cannot be the source of genuinely autonomous action (the sort of thing that would ground responsibility)" (Leiter, 292). Having rejected the concept of *causa sui,* and thus asserting himself as a determinist, Nietzsche further criticizes the metaphysical concepts that surround the idea of freewill. Nietzsche's rejection of the idea that human beings are self-creating causes of their actions, or *causa sui*, is related to his second rejection concerning the metaphysical notions surrounding freewill.

Nietzsche's second critique of human agency concerns his rejection of the idea that the act of willing is the primary cause of human action. In describing how the understanding of the *will as cause* is an inaccurate conception, Nietzsche vividly portrays

that such an idea exists only in "the 'inner world' [which] is full of illusions and jack-o'-lanterns: the will is one of them" (*TI*, VI: 4). According to Nietzsche, "in all willing there is, first, a plurality of sensations, namely, the sensation of the state "*away from which*" [and] the sensation of the state "*towards which*," (*BGE*, 19). This statement reflects the act of willing as a result of the interplay between affirmative and negative responses towards stimuli. For Nietzsche, the will is a feeling resulting from deterministic inclinations and antipathy. Nietzsche also contends that the action of the will is directed by habit, or "a kind of muscular feeling that comes into play" (*BGE*, 19). Nietzsche believes that seeing the will as a singular and unified cause is a misinterpretation of the concept of the will, since this interpretation allows one to see the will as more than an element amid a complicated network of physical and psychological forces. In such an interpretation, the will is seen as a separate subject or self, which can then be judged or held responsible. Nietzsche insists that not only is the will an insufficient cause for action, but by performing the act of willing we are expressing some confidence that the willed action can be performed. According to Nietzsche, this confidence is due to the other deterministic factors inclining us toward the willed act, and the willing is only a feeling of superiority over one's self that is actually a result of the complicated network of deterministic factors. As stated by Nietzsche, "the person doing the willing thus acquires the joyful feeling of the successful implements carrying out the order, the serviceable 'under-wills' or under-souls—for our body is merely a social construct of many souls" (*BGE*, 19). These under-wills, or multiple souls, can be understood as the various factors that affect one's actions. They range from biological factors to psychological experiences, and they collectively help to determine how one will act in a

particular situation. This differs from the metaphysical interpretation of freewill, which assigns the entire act of willing to the self. In Nietzsche's opinion the will is not an active force that causes action, but a multi-faceted range of deterministic factors that affect how one acts in a particular situation. Nietzsche completely rejects the concept of the *will as cause*, arguing that, "at the beginning stands the great disaster of an error that the *will* is something at work—that will is a capacity. . . Nowadays we know that it is just a word. . ." (*TI*, III: 5). Nietzsche argues that even freewill, the belief that a person is actually directing their actions, is a result of deterministic factors at work. According to Nietzsche this belief allows for a pleasurable feeling of superiority over one's self, which he believes to be an incorrect interpretation of what is actually a multiplicity of deterministic biological and psychological forces. Nietzsche undermines the understanding of *will as cause*, promulgating in its stead the idea that the will is an effect. Freewill, or "will" in general, is an *effect* of deterministic factors, and not a *cause* of action.

The false understanding of the *will as cause* is closely related to the development of the idea that conscious thought plays the only active role in human willing. He considers the confusion of the "will" as a cause of action, instead of understanding it as an effect of deterministic forces, as one of the primary errors of the belief in human agency. Nietzsche furthers his critique of freewill by addressing the concept of cause and effect relationships. This is best demonstrated in his statement, "morality and religion belong entirely under the *psychology of error*: in every single case cause and effect are confused; . . . or a state of consciousness is confused with causality of this state" (*TI*, VI: 6). For Nietzsche, the belief that our conscious thought is a transparent window into the world of understanding cause and effect relationships is one of the distinct blunders

associated with the metaphysical concept of freewill. In speaking of pleasure and pain, he outlines one example of how cause and effect are confused. In ordinary philosophical thought, pleasure and pain have been seen as causes for the inclination toward good things and the aversion to negative things. According to Nietzsche, "one is simply deceiving oneself if one thinks they cause anything at all," for him pleasure and pain are a product of deterministic forces (*WP*, 478). Nietzsche notes that pleasure and pain are not to be understood as causes; they are, first and foremost, effects of experience. For example burning one's hand is a cause of displeasure. It is through conscious thought that we come to interpret pleasure and pain as mere causes of action. Nietzsche suggests that consciousness gives human beings a false view of their ability to cause action.

The belief that conscious thought gives us a transparent view of the world and ourselves, enabling us to understand our motivations, is another manifestation of the metaphysical concept of freewill or human agency. Nietzsche criticizes this understanding of consciousness stating, "the 'motive': another error. Merely a surface phenomenon of consciousness . . ." (*TI*, VI: 4). For Nietzsche, the concept of consciousness deludes human beings into thinking that they are actively and deliberately choosing their actions. In actuality there is an entire network of causes that escape human consciousness. In the aphorism, *Alleged Conflict of Motives*, Nietzsche explains how consciousness misleads human beings into believing that they are active agents who consciously direct their behavior. He proceeds by explaining the complicated process by which we assume to make decisions and to act. This process is characterized by a "reflective consciousness" that examines a situation by taking into account the possible consequences involved in taking a course of action, weighing them against alternatives,

and deciding upon the best way to direct one's action. Nietzsche rejects this conception of decision-making because he argues that, "we lack the scales and weights for this casuistry of action" (*D*, 129). Here Nietzsche articulates his conviction that we lack the tools to weigh different consequences on the *same* scale. Moreover, Nietzsche contends that even if we had such tools, human beings would still lack the ability to gain a full picture of the consequences. Though, through the decision-making process elucidated above, one comes to think one has a full view of one's motives. However, according to Nietzsche, many of our motives are unconscious, and therefore unknown. Nietzsche contends that our inability to take unconscious motives into account is one of the ways that moral thought misinterprets causal action. For Nietzsche, these unconscious motives are deterministic, and he argues that not only does moral thought fail to take these into account, but also that what is perceived as conscious thought, or will, is merely an effect of deterministic unconscious forces.

The last, and perhaps the most anathematic concept to Nietzsche, is the idea of a singular and unified "soul," or "I". Nietzsche uses numerous terms in order to refer to the unchanging substance within a person that is responsible for causing action, including "soul," "I," "ego," "the subject," "the mind," and "spirit". These terms are often used interchangeably by Nietzsche in order to define the same concept. Here we will refer to the autonomous causal agent, proposed by the metaphysical concept of freewill, as the "soul," or "I". This concept is characterized by the notion that there is some entity within every human being that is unchanging and responsible for causing one's actions. This is often, especially in religious thought, seen as the eternal part of an individual that is morally responsible and has the potential for an afterlife. Nietzsche takes issue with this

metaphysical conception of the self, stating, "thanks to the synthetic idea of 'I,' a whole series of mistaken conclusions and, consequently, false evaluations of the will attach themselves to the act of willing" (*BGE*, 19). The beliefs surrounding the metaphysical concept of the soul thus become another one of the central issues with which Nietzsche disagrees.

In section 12 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche criticizes the belief in an immutable soul as a "metaphysical need" which led human thought, and especially Christianity, to the development of the concept of *soul atomism*. This atomism entails attributing a "substantial and unitary" character to the soul (Schacht, 132). Richard Schacht best explains Nietzsche's critique of the soul in pointing out that soul atomism is "linked with the idea that it [the soul] is essentially immutable, and thus 'ahistorical,' in the sense of having that status of something that does not *become* what it is through some sort of contingent developmental process or processes" (Schacht, 132). For Nietzsche, the idea that the soul has neither developed out of deterministic forces, nor been affected by them, is an unverifiable metaphysical idea. For this reason Nietzsche does not feel it necessary to engage in a detailed refutation of the concept, and instead focuses on the confused development of this idea.

He attributes the development of the metaphysical idea of the "soul," or "I," to an error due to linguistic reasoning. In regard to the famous Cartesian *cogito*, he concludes that the notion that there has to be a thinker who conceives a thought "is simply a formulation of our grammatical custom that adds a doer to every deed" (*WP*, 484). The idea that every deed requires a doer, or every predicate requires a subject, does not

necessarily apply to human thought. Nietzsche introduces an onslaught of questions that arise out of this idea, including the following challenges:

> that it is *I* who think, that there must necessarily be something that thinks, that thinking is an activity and an operation on the part of a being who is thought of as a cause, that there is an "ego," and finally, that it is already determined what is to be designated by thinking—that I *know* what thinking is. (*BGE*, 16)

Nietzsche introduces a multiplicity of earth-shaking questions regarding what seemed so self-evident and indubitable to Descartes. For Nietzsche, the purpose of the creation of such a concept of a "soul" was to make humankind predictable. As a result of this misinterpretation of the "self" and freewill, mankind has, "learned to distinguish necessary events from chance ones, to think causally," and as a result has become *calculable*, *regular*, and *necessary* (*GM*, II: 1). According to Nietzsche the concept of a "soul," as well as the metaphysical ideas surrounding freewill, contain absolutely no value. "Man's three 'inner facts', the things he believed in most firmly—the will, the mind, the I—were projected out of himself: he derived the concept of Being from the concept of the I, and posited the existence of 'things' after his own image, after his concept of the I as cause" (*TI*, VI: 4). Here, Nietzsche holds that the concept of the "I" was created by man for his own purposes. Nietzsche exclaims, "And as for the I! It has become a fable, a fiction, a play on words: it has completely given up thinking, feeling, and willing!" (*TI*, VI: 4). Nietzsche continues to refute the concept of human agency and the metaphysical ideas surrounding freewill by disrupting their foundational concept, the "soul". Without a solid and unified concept of a "soul," or "I," the concept of freewill lacks a causal agent. This, as we will see in the following chapter, poses serious dilemmas for the ethical notion of moral responsibility. By questioning the metaphysical

assumptions that surround the concept of the "soul," Nietzsche further distinguishes himself as a determinist.

Nietzsche's critique of human agency, and more specifically the metaphysical concepts that make up the concept of freewill, is manifold. In order to refute the idea that humans are active and autonomous causes of their actions, Nietzsche attacks numerous concepts that encircle the idea of agency. He critiques the following concepts: human beings as self-creating (*causa sui*); they possess a completely autonomous will; they are able to see the world transparently through conscious thought; and that they have a "soul," or "I" that directs their actions. In fact, he completely denies the existence of these ideas in their Christian moral form, stating, "There exists neither 'spirit,' nor reason. Nor thinking, nor consciousness, nor soul, nor will, nor truth: all are fictions that are of no use" (*WP*, 480). Nietzsche completely and utterly rejects the metaphysical notions surrounding freewill and human agency. According to him, ideas like the "soul," are fictions that have been created out of a mistaken interpretation of the world and linguistic thought. In addition to his critique of the *metaphysical* concept of freewill, he also critiques the concept on a moral level. In the following chapter I will analyze Nietzsche's argument against the moral concept of freewill.

Chapter 2:

The previous chapter discussed Nietzsche's critique of the metaphysical concepts that contribute to the formation of the concept of freewill. In addition to rejecting metaphysical concepts such as the "soul" for being rationally unsound, Nietzsche sees these concepts as contributing to the development of the moral concept of freewill. The addition of a critique of the moral concept of freewill further supports the reading that Nietzsche is a determinist. Had he chosen only to focus on the metaphysical grounding of freewill, his critique would point out that humans commonly misconceive of themselves as causal agents; but this misconception would hold no real value in human life. The value that concepts and ideas contain is precisely what makes up the majority of Nietzsche's work on freewill. Nietzsche's attention to the value of the moral concept of freewill places his critique within the larger philosophical context of how human beings ought to live. Nietzsche believes that the moral concept of freewill is harmful due to its negative psychological effects. For this reason it is necessary to consider Nietzsche's critique of the moral concept of freewill as an investigation into how our moral concepts create values and give shape to our lives. In undertaking this critique, Nietzsche creates a new challenge for philosophy, stating that "we need a *critique* of moral values, *for once the value of these values must itself be called into question*" (*GM*, P: 6). This chapter provides an exposition of Nietzsche's investigation into the moral concept of freewill. His findings result in a critique of freewill as well as the value of morality itself. However, in order to conduct this critique of the moral concept of freewill, Nietzsche uses a moral compass of sorts that allows him to judge the value of freewill and its moral repercussions. Before launching into his critique of the moral concept of freewill, it is

necessary to understand the weights and scales Nietzsche implements in order to critique freewill.

Nietzsche evaluates the value of a moral concept based on whether the concept provides for life-affirmation or life-denial. This means that he attributes positive value to concepts that allow for human beings to affirm their lives, instincts, passions, and desires. On the other hand, Nietzsche gives negative value to a moral concept if it promotes a life-denying form of existence, encouraging suffering, self-discipline, and sacrifice. Life-affirmation is what is primarily at stake for Nietzsche in his study of morality. He believes that affirming one's life is the optimum state of existence for human beings, allowing them to flourish and live up to their maximum potential. Nietzsche views the concept of freewill as a tool used by Judeo-Christianity that inhibits human beings from achieving life-affirmation.

Nietzsche describes the characteristics of a life-affirming individual throughout his work. One primary characteristic of a life-affirming human being is a healthy and strong natural disposition. He describes such people as "spirits strengthened by war and victory, for whom conquest, adventure, danger, and even pain have become needs" (*GM*, 24). For Nietzsche, this natural physical fortitude is further enhanced by a "wanting to be oneself, being able to be different, standing alone and having to live independently" (*BGE*, 212). This focus on independence and self-assurance is an important characteristic of human flourishing. He further describes a life-affirming individual as having a firm grounding in reality. This involves a rejection of metaphysical beliefs like Christianity (*GM*, 24). Most importantly, flourishing for Nietzsche involves the acceptance of his concept of eternal recurrence. Eternal recurrence can be understood as the desire and

willingness to live one's life over again, exactly as it was. It is the acceptance of all that was good and bad in one's life (*GS*, 341). The willingness to accept all that is both painful and beneficial in life is essential to life-affirmation. According to Nietzsche, "to 'give style' to one's character" is the process by which flourishing individuals are able to find purpose in their weak and strong characteristics (*GS*, 290). The acceptance of all that it is to be human is instrumental in achieving flourishing, and affirming one's life. Nietzsche calls this healthy, strong, independent, and self-sufficient type of human being a *redeeming* human. Also understood as the Overman, Nietzsche assigns this type of individual the task of turning around the harmful aspects of Christian morality and steering humanity away from *decadence*, the lowest and most pathetic form of human life. Nietzsche's creation of the concept of such an individual is based on his understanding of how Christianity and moral norms affect human beings. He views Christianity as promoting a life-denying psychology through the creation of mistaken ideals, such as freewill.

In examining Nietzsche's concept of life-affirmation, one can begin to see the formation of some kind of a reliance on the idea of freedom or agency in his thought. The above-mentioned qualities imply that a life-affirming individual is expected to have some kind of agency that allows him or her to make value judgments and act in the world. However, this concept in no way should be seen as similar to the idea of freewill in the Judeo-Christian sense. Nietzsche offers a devastating critique of the concept of freewill and human agency in moral, and especially Christian, thought. For Nietzsche, Christian morality does not allow for individuals to flourish; instead it offers a weakened and tamed form of existence. Nietzsche devotes a major portion of his philosophical work to

the question of the benefits of morality. He was particularly critical of Christian morality because he viewed it as promoting life-denying characteristics. Nietzsche explains life-denying characteristics as those concepts with a moral system that encourage followers to live at a diminished form of existence.

For Nietzsche, the moral concept of freewill directly encourages people to reject life affirmation and instead promotes unhealthy concepts such as responsibility and guilt. The metaphysical errors outlined by Nietzsche in the previous chapter are only part of his critique of freewill and human agency. Nietzsche offers an even more sustained critique of the moral concept of freewill. His criticism of freewill and its moral implications serve to further explicate his position on the capacity for human agency and autonomy. Nietzsche critiques the moral concept of freewill for the purpose of demonstrating how Judeo-Christian moral concepts promote life-denial. In order to understand Nietzsche's critique of the moral concept of freewill, this chapter will examine several aspects of his work: (1) the development of the concept or freewill within slave morality; (2) the ascetic priest's role in this development of the concept; and (3) the devastating effects the creation of the moral concept of freewill has inflicted upon humanity, including responsibility, guilt, and bad conscience.

Nietzsche uses a genealogical approach in tracking the development of the concept of freewill and moral values. In explaining the origins of Christian morality, he develops a story, or fable of sorts, that I will call the master/slave dichotomy. The master/slave dichotomy is Nietzsche's attempt to shed some light on the origins of Judeo-Christian morality. His story is not an attempt to reveal some truth about the history of human beings; instead it is a parable that introduces a number of important questions

about morality. The work in which he presents this story, *On the Genealogy of Morality,* is not intended to be "an actual history of morality" but is instead intended to tell us something about "the truth about human excellence" (Berkowitz, 75). The master/slave dichotomy is the launching pad for his project against Christian morality, and it is also the origin of his critique against the moral concept of freewill.

The master/slave dichotomy is a tale of a social structure that Nietzsche uses in order to explain the origin of the Judeo-Christian moral system. This social structure is responsible for utilizing the metaphysical concepts developed in the first chapter for social purposes. For instance, the concept of the soul "is a virtual presupposition of the viability of social life among human beings, he contends, that they regard themselves and each other as accountable for their actions through time; for it is only thus that they may be deemed both liable to imputations of responsibility and guilt for actions performed in the past..." (Schacht, 136). In this passage, Schacht explains Nietzsche's thought on the moral concept of freewill and its social implications. For Nietzsche, the freewill is a tool used within a particular social system to impose moral responsibility on human beings. Through the explanation of the master/slave dichotomy, Nietzsche illustrates the social forces that were responsible for the Christian moral concept of freewill.

The social structure of the master/slave dichotomy is comprised of two halves, the master class and the slave class. Nietzsche describes the masters as healthy, brave, and inherently overflowing with power. In opposition to the masters there is the slave class, which Nietzsche characterizes as weak, unhealthy, utterly overworked, and, most importantly, resentful about their status in life. The master class holds all the power in its relationship with the slaves. For Nietzsche, the key element in the creation of this social

structure is understanding how the ethics of each class were created and what purpose their moral system served.

Using etymological examples, Nietzsche attempts to prove that one can identify the key aspects of the master's moral system in the master/slave dichotomy. He hypothesizes that the words commonly used for "good" and "bad" in many languages were often synonymous with the terms used for "noble" and "common". The following etymological examples illustrate how Nietzsche uses language in order to create a "sign system" to help discern the underlying psychology of the master and slave classes. Nietzsche explains that the masters distinguish themselves as "good", in the sense that their lives are good, healthy, happy, and strong. He uses the Greek word *agathos*, which can be defined as good, well-born, noble, brave, and capable. Here, Nietzsche uses this etymological example to point out how the ideas of someone being "good" and "noble" were once conflated. The numerous meanings of this word indicate how, in the master's moral system, being considered good and noble, or of the higher rank, were conflated. Naturally, it follows that the masters characterize their opposite, the slave class, as "bad". One etymological example that Nietzsche gives of this happening is in the German word *schlecht*. This word for bad is identical to the German word *schlicht* which means common, plain, or simple; this common etymological origin implies an association of the word "bad" with the slave class (*GM*, I: 4-5). Nietzsche uses these and similar etymological examples to articulate what he thought to be the major moral and ethical concepts of "good" and "bad" within the social structure of the Master/Slave Dichotomy. The master class deemed itself good as a result of its natural domination of the slave class due to its members' physical and mental prowess. The slave class was described as bad as

a result of its natural state of being weak and unhealthy. However, this system did not last.

According to Nietzsche, the master's complete and utter domination over the slave class resulted in a deep and seething resentment within the slave class toward the master class. As a result of their natural position in the world, the slave class was unable to gain power over the master class. Therefore, the slave class created for itself an imaginary form of revenge that resulted in real world consequences, which Nietzsche calls *ressentiment*. According to Nietzsche the slaves' resentment was unique because, "the 'well-born' [master class] simply *felt* themselves to be the 'happy'; they did not first have to construct their happiness artificially by looking at their enemies, to talk themselves into it, to *lie themselves into it* (as all human beings of *ressentiment* tend to do)" (*GM*, I: 10). *Ressentiment* is life-denying in that it promotes belief in otherworldly moral concepts that harm the master class in finding them morally culpable for exercising their innate strength and power. The slaves' urge to hold the master class responsible is inspired by a need to judge, punish, and hold others guilty for their actions. According to Nietzsche scholar, John Richardson, *ressentiment* "shapes this subject [the master] to serve as the ideal subject for its rage: it wants to hang all the blame for its suffering on (a) distinct targets, on isolable and sufficient causes, and on (b) final targets, on causes that are first free, in the sense that in them explanation (and accountability) ends" (Richardson, 210-11). Here, Richardson describes how the slave class uses the false concept of a unified self in order to attribute autonomous agency to the master class. For Nietzsche, this move to give masters the capacity for freewill gives the slave class a singular and unified subject to resent: the master. In the psychology of the slave class, the

feeling of *ressentiment* works "to instill in those induced to adopt it the slave's 'evil eye' for human nature and the condition of human life . . . [*R*]*essentiment* lingers on, casting a pall over human life and poisoning the wellsprings of human growth and development" (Schacht, 438). Nietzsche believes that the slave class' feelings of *ressentiment* result in life-denying consequences because they reject the master's natural inclination toward strength and health. *Ressentiment* is dependent upon the implementation of the moral concept of freewill because a slave "wants its enemies (who might include itself) to be free, because this makes them maximally culpable" (Richardson, 211). Nietzsche rejects the concept of freewill because it allows for the promotion of life-denying, anti-master values. These feelings of resentment, coupled with a movement toward the belief in imaginary metaphysical ideals, provide the catalyst for the slave class' movement against the masters.

However, the slave class' movement would not be complete without the implementation of the mechanism of freewill. In order to hold the master class culpable for its domination of the slaves, it is necessary that the master class had the choice to be and act otherwise. Nietzsche suggests that the master class is naturally inclined to its higher social status; but the slave class denies this fact by making the master an active agent who is singularly responsible for his or her status and actions. Part of this movement is a result of a metaphysical misinterpretation of master psychology, which was discussed in the first chapter is and further explained in the following passage:

> For just as common people separate the lightning from its flash and take the latter as a doing, as an effect of a subject called lightning, so popular morality also separates strength from the expressions of strength as if there were behind the strong an indifferent substratum that is free to express strength—or not to. (*GM,* 1: 13)

The slave class mistakenly concludes that the masters' expressions of domination and strength over the slave class are a consequence of the master's *choosing* to act in a particular way. For Nietzsche, the masters are simply determined beings; they do not choose to be strong, domineering, and healthy. Their actions are a result of being biologically and psychologically determined to be masters. Nietzsche goes on to further explain how the slave class holds the master class responsible for being "themselves" by using a metaphor involving a bird of prey and a lamb. Nietzsche explains that it is no

> small wonder if the suppressed, hiddenly glowing affects of revenge and hate exploit this belief and basically even uphold no other belief more ardently than this one, that *the strong is free* to be weak, and the bird of prey to be a lamb:—they thereby gain for themselves the right to hold the bird of prey *accountable* for being a bird of prey. . . . (*GM,* I: 13)

Here, Nietzsche critiques the moral concept of freewill, in addition to the metaphysical reasons for his determinism mentioned in the previous chapter. The concept of freewill, and the idea that the masters are active and autonomous agents, serves to allow the slave class to condemn the masters and exalt themselves. In a further and perhaps absurd turn of events, the members of the slave class place the same concept of freewill onto their own actions. But instead of holding themselves responsible for their weakness and servitude, the slaves elect to view themselves as actively choosing their weakened state. Nietzsche states that it is "as if the very weakness of the weak—that is to say, his *essence*, his effecting, his whole unique, unavoidable, undetached reality—were a voluntary achievement, something willed, something chosen, a *deed*, a *merit*" (*GM,* I: 13). He obviously thinks this is an absurd but useful idea for the slave class. Through the implementation of the concept of freewill, the slave class shifted the paradigm of the rule of the master class towards *slave morality*.

The slave class' feelings of *ressentiment*, coupled with the concept of freewill, set the stage for the creation of a *slave morality*. This form of morality requires a reversal of the master's moral system, which attributes "goodness" to being a healthy and strong master and "badness" to being a weak and unhealthy slave. In contrast to the master system of values, *slave morality* exalts slaves as "good" and interprets their weakness as a positive attribute. In the "First Treatise" of *On Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche playfully describes the report of a character called Mr. Wanton-Curiosity and Daredevil. This character describes how the slave class manages to recast examples of weakness as a series of virtuous attributes. He explains how "weakness is to be lied into a *merit*" and offers versions of such lies in the following passage:

> powerlessness that does not retaliate [changes] into kindness; fearful baseness into 'humility'; subjection to those whom one hates into 'obedience' (namely to one whom they say orders this subjection—they call him God). The inoffensiveness of the weak one, cowardice itself, which he possesses in abundance, his standing-at-the-door, his unavoidable having-to-wait, acquires good name here, such as 'patience,' it is even called virtue *itself*; not being able to avenge oneself is called not wanting to avenge oneself, perhaps even forgiveness. (*GM,* I: 14)

In writing on the origins and development of slave morality, Nietzsche introduces a subset within the slave class that is responsible for the creation of slave morality and for the reversal of moral values described in the passage above. He accuses the priestly class of leading the slave revolt against master morality, thus creating a new form of morality that will result in horrific and life-denying effects. For Nietzsche, the priestly class is primarily responsible for creating the concept of freewill that resulted in the moral downfall of the master class and inflicted life-denying values onto humanity.

Nietzsche believes that slave morality was created in order for the slave class to regain some power from the master class. He sees two groups within the slave class: the

general population, which continues to be weak and oppressed, and a subset of a priestly class who lead the reaction against master morality. The priestly portion of the slave class had certain values which it upheld, mainly purity and the valuation of ascetic ideals. The priestly class values ascetic ideals that deny life, such as self-sacrifice, self-denial, and self-discipline. By virtue of their ascetic ideals, the priestly class is the weakest and most helpless social position in contrast to the master class. Though seemingly weak, Nietzsche considered the priestly class the *most evil enemies* in that "out of their powerlessness their hate grows into something enormous and uncanny, into something most spiritual and most poisonous" (*GM*, I: 7). In the system of slave morality, which values all that had previously been considered weak, the acetic ideal is the priests' "best tool of power, also the 'most high' permission to power" (*GM*, III: 1). The priest gains power by finding belovedness by God in ascetic qualities. Since the priest and his slave constituents are weak and powerless in the physical world, the priest finds opportunity in the spiritual world. In order to seek power the priest class develops a schema in which it inverts the masters' ethical system. The priests boldly declare:

> the miserable alone are good; the poor, powerless, lowly alone are the good; the suffering, deprived, sick, ugly are also the only blessed in God, for them alone is there blessedness,—whereas you, you noble and powerful ones, you are in all eternity the evil, the cruel, the lustful, the insatiable, the godless, you will eternally be the wretched, accursed, and damned! (*GM*, I: 7)

In creating slave morality the priest establishes himself as the "foreordained savior, shepherd, and advocate of the sick herd. . . . *Dominion over ones who suffer* is his realm" (*GM,* III: 15). Nietzsche describes the priestly class as seeking power, but they do so in a manner very different from the master class. The latter dominates others from a position

of health and strength, whereas the priestly class seeks to wield power from a diminished and sickly state of existence.

According to Nietzsche the priestly class uses the moral concept of freewill as its primary tool for controlling both the healthy and unhealthy classes alike. By making human beings responsible for their actions, and furthermore responsible to the all-powerful and all-knowing Judeo-Christian God, the priestly class seeks to gain power for themselves and to elevate the social status of the slave class. Nietzsche claims that the idea that human beings are autonomous agents was developed because "the priests at the head of their communities, wanted to give themselves the *right* to impose punishments—or give God the right to do so. . . . People were thought of as 'free' so that they could be judged and punished—so that they could become *guilty*" (*TI*, VI: 7). Nietzsche believes that the concept of freewill has been used by Christianity to inflict an evil upon humanity: guilt. Guilt, or "bad conscience" (as he more frequently refers to it), is one of the primary life-denying concepts of Christian morality. In considering the function of freewill in moral systems, he states, "we no longer have any sympathy nowadays for the concept of 'free will': we know only too well what it is—the most disreputable piece of trickery the theologians have produced, aimed at making humanity 'responsible' in their sense, i.e., at *making it dependent on them* . . ." (*TI*, VI: 7). In order to examine how the concept of bad conscience came into being, Nietzsche hypothesizes that "the feeling of guilt, of personal obligation . . . had its origin, as we have seen, in the oldest and most primitive relationship among persons there is, the relationship between buyer and seller, creditor and debtor" (*GM*, II: 8). For Nietzsche, The debtor/creditor relationship is based on the idea that humans have freewill and it has resulted in life-denying consequences.

In the *Second Treatise* of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche examines what he calls the debtor/creditor relationship, which has transformed into Christian moral responsibility and guilt. His evaluation begins by introducing the idea that human beings enjoy inflicting suffering on others and, through the debtor/creditor relation, the infliction of pain onto another became just payment for a wrong done. Here, humanity found an outlet for the instinct and desire toward causing pain. But as society developed it suppressed this instinct; morality replaces the infliction of pain on another with the infliction of guilt upon them. However, Christian morality needs individuals to be free agents in order for the moral system to function. Nietzsche explains, "people were thought of as 'free' so that they could be judged, punished—so that they could become guilty: consequently every action had to be thought of as willed, the origin of every action had to be located in the consciousness" (*TI*, VI: 7). Bad conscience emerges, for Nietzsche, when the avenue for inflicting pain upon others is blocked. Instead, the inclination manifests itself in the feeling of guilt, having turned itself against the individual. Nietzsche says that, "this man of bad conscience has taken over the religious presupposition in order to drive his self-torture to its most gruesome severity and sharpness. It is in "guilt before God: this thought becomes the instrument of torture for him" (*GM*, II: 22). Christian morality encourages people to hold themselves up against and be in debt to the ultimate ideal: God. With the help of the ascetic priest, the debtor/creditor relation is recast. Every human becomes in debt to the ultimate creditor, God. Instead of a financial obligation, sin becomes currency, and one is encouraged to live an ascetic existence, denying one's passions, desires, and instincts. Moral responsibility, guilt, and bad conscience are completely reliant upon the creation of the

false concept of freewill. Morality manipulates the ideal of free agency and will in order to inflict 'bad conscience' onto humankind, further taming and weakening followers of Christian morality and non-followers, alike.

Nietzsche's critique of the moral concept of freewill is part of his larger argument against Judeo-Christian morality. He criticizes freewill because he believes that it promotes life-denial. His critique of the moral concept of freewill is woven into his genealogical survey of morality. The problems the surround a belief in autonomous agency can be seen in his development of slave morality, his description of the ascetic priest, and in the negative effects he derives from the implementation of the concept of freewill. Paired with his metaphysical arguments against the concept of freewill and human agency, Nietzsche's moral argument provides a strong case for depicting him as a determinist. However, as seen in the beginning of this chapter, his affirmative morality would indicate that his thought relies upon a certain concept of freewill or agency. The following chapter discusses a very different portrait of Nietzsche and his philosophical concept of freedom.

Chapter Three:

As demonstrated in the first two chapters, a major portion of Nietzsche's philosophical work is dedicated to the critique of the concept of freewill in both the metaphysical and moral senses. In the first chapter, Nietzsche rejected the metaphysical concept of freewill because it depends upon imaginary metaphysical concepts in order to prove the existence of a stable and fixed subject capable of willing. In chapter two, Nietzsche further critiques the concept of freewill, in its moral sense, because it is used in order to promote life-denying concepts. By claiming that human beings are responsible agents who can be judged and punished for their actions, the concept of freewill promotes ascetic principles. Nietzsche obviously rejects the concept of freewill on many different levels. However, this fact does not necessarily make him a determinist. In fact, Nietzsche also offers a compelling, yet shorter critique of determinism.

In Nietzsche's work on the subject of will it becomes apparent that he rejects the notion of classical determinism in addition to his rejection of freewill. Classical determinism is the philosophical view that every action is necessary "given the totality of facts prior to [the time in which the action occurred], together with the actual laws of nature" (Leiter 288). In a passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche analyzes the problem and concerns that surround the concepts of freedom and determinism. In continuing with this theme of rejecting the metaphysical concept of freewill outlined in chapter one of this paper, he describes the concerns of people who hold onto the concept of freewill. He states that, "some will not give up their 'responsibility,' their belief in *themselves*, the personal rights to *their* merits at any price (the vain races belong to this class)" (*BGE* 21). In this passage Nietzsche describes the slave moralist's need for the

belief in freewill. In addition to rejecting the concept of freewill, he also critiques those who choose to view the world in the opposite context, determined. He states that this type of person "on the contrary, do[es] not wish to be answerable for anything, or blamed for anything, and owing to an inward self contempt, seek[s] to *lay blame for themselves somewhere else*" (*BGE*, 21). Here, we can see evidence that though Nietzsche completely rejects the common notion of freewill, his position as a determinist is complicated. The primary reason why Nietzsche criticizes people who believe in determinism, or the "unfree will," is because he believes that it is similar to freewill, in that the "unfree will" promotes false metaphysical concepts.

Earlier in the passage mentioned above he diagnoses the concept of the "unfree will" as a misinterpretation of cause and effect relationships. This critique is similar to his critique of the metaphysical concepts that surround freewill, discussed in chapter one. He criticizes the underlying determinist notion that behind all effects are causes, and people are therefore determined by the causes and circumstances around them. Nietzsche proposes that "one should use 'cause' and 'effect' only as pure concepts, that is to say, as conventional fictions for the purpose of designation and communication—not for explanation" (*BGE*, 21). In this passage Nietzsche suggests that the idea of causal relationships was created as a tool for practical purposes by human beings; and it should not be understood as if casual relationships existed "in themselves". For Nietzsche, understanding the world as completely determined has life-denying effects that result from determinism's basis in false metaphysical concepts. Both freewill and determinism depend upon a belief in cause and effect relationships, which lead to life-denial. Nietzsche scholar, John Richardson, explains that Nietzsche rejects the "unfree will"

because, "this determinism adopts part of the Free-will story for its new attack: it still thinks in terms of discrete causes" (Richardson, 211). Freewill and determinism are similar in the sense that both produce life-denying consequences by misinterpreting metaphysical concepts. In the case of freewill, one is made responsible for everything and this encourages guilt and bad conscience. While determinism in its most mechanistic form concludes that humans lack any responsibility whatsoever. Nietzsche's primary critique of classical determinism is that it negates the need for any concept of an active capacity to will "by flattening everything into dead and aimless atoms and forces" (Richardson, 211). Therefore, Nietzsche disapproves of determinism because it depicts human actions as purposeless. Interestingly, Nietzsche is critical of determinism because he sees it as an attempt to dodge personal responsibility for one's actions and one's fate. Nietzsche diagnosis of determinism as life-denying because of its inclusion of false metaphysical concepts and its escapism from personal responsibility. Freewill and determinism's promotion of life denial is predicated on their misinterpretation of cause and effect phenomena being the locus of human action. Nietzsche offers a different perspective on the causes of human action, namely will to power.

Instead of accepting either doctrine, of freewill or determinism, Nietzsche conceives of the human will as being a product of the power relationships in which one is immersed. The will to power is Nietzsche's idea that "everything that happens in the world … may be interpreted in terms of power relationships within and among configurations of forces the basic tendency of which is to assert themselves toward others in and expanding or expending transformative manner" (*OCP*, 911). In the case of human beings, all of their actions can be considered expressions of their will to power, or need to

exert and gain power over their environment and people around them. Nietzsche sees the active force of will to power at work in many areas of human life. Will to power can be considered a neutral phenomenon in that it is at work in both life-affirming and life-denying human projects. Nietzsche understood will to power as the primary initiative that drives the concept of slave morality described in the previous chapter. For Nietzsche, will to power drives all of the world's activity, and it can be beneficial when manifested in healthy individuals and destructive in unhealthy forms of human life.

The idea of human actions being driven by one's will to power is a radical departure from thinking of human will in terms of free or determined, and Nietzsche's concept of will to power is essential in understanding his unique position on human agency. Richardson suggests that Nietzsche is critical of both freedom and determinism because both of these philosophical concepts fail to depict the world in terms of will to power. Instead both freewill and determinism explain actions in terms of causes and effects. Richardson proposes that, "when we see the world's real 'parts' are willful processes defined by their power relations to one another, we see that there are no self-sufficient parts and that things 'condition' one another in an even more penetrating way than determinism had supposed, we learn a new form of that thought, a new fatalism" (Richardson, 211). This passage from Richardson suggests Nietzsche holds a novel position in relation to freewill and determinism. Instead of taking up either binary conception of human will, Nietzsche creates a third position, a different conception of fatalism that is a controversial topic in current Nietzsche scholarship.

The main reason why Nietzsche's position on freewill and determinism is such a controversial topic in Nietzsche studies is due to some seemingly inconsistent concepts in

Nietzsche's philosophical work. Much of his work can be characterized by statements such as, "the individual is a piece of fate from top to bottom, one more law, one more necessity for all that is to come and will be" (*TI*, V: 6). This statement articulates Nietzsche position as a fatalist who understands one's life as a set of circumstance that unfold out of necessity. However, Nietzsche also seems to believe in the existence of a sovereign individual who has the power to create autonomously. In a dissimilar passage he asks if there "is sufficient pride, daring, courage, self-confidence available today, sufficient will of the spirit, will to responsibility, *freedom of the will*, for the 'philosopher' to be henceforth--*possible* on earth?--" (*GM*, III: 10). In this passage Nietzsche begins to describe his belief in the possibility of the development of an individual who is seemingly autonomous. However, Nietzsche's concept must be different from ordinary conceptions of freewill and determinism, because he dismisses both concepts for being committed to metaphysical concepts that promote life-denial.

Nietzsche uses the term *freedom of the will* in order to describe an individual who has risen above thinking about willing in the binary terms of freewill vs. determinism. This sovereign individual is willing in a new way that upon first glance looks almost identical to the common conception of freewill. Nietzsche describes his term, *freedom of the will* as "the expression for the complex state of the person exercising volition, who commands and at the same time identifies with the executor of the order--who, as such, enjoys also the triumph over obstacles" (*BGE*, 19). This passage articulates the concept of a sovereign individual in Nietzsche's philosophical work, who has the freedom to manipulate himself or herself and their surroundings. Nietzsche's philosophical work, on the individual's ability to create and control one's actions, is best outlined in his

discussions on personal character and responsibility. Nietzsche proposes that human beings have the ability to control their instincts and direct their actions in three different senses.

First, Nietzsche suggests that human beings have capacity to direct and control their behavior in regard to the strength or weakness of their will. Having denied conceiving of human will as determined, Nietzsche states, "the 'unfree' will is mythology; in real life it is only a matter of *strong* and *weak* wills" (*BGE*, 21). Nietzsche rejects the idea that human beings have a "will" in reality, because it is a problematic and false concept. Human will, and more specifically the concept of freewill, entail the existence of an autonomous agent that is able to act and make decisions in the world. However, understanding the world as completely determined is also problematic because it leads to a complete and utter lack or responsibility for one's behavior and welfare. Instead, Nietzsche chooses to think of human willing in terms of weakness and strength. For Nietzsche, weakness of will is characterized by a chaotic and disorganized system of impulses, instincts and desires. He states, "the multitude and disintegration of impulses and the lack of any systematic order among them result in a 'weak will'" (*WP*, 46). In addition to this, Nietzsche also describes human beings who have weak wills as having no control over their impulses. He explains that "only the degenerate find radical means indispensable; weakness of the will, and more specifically the inability *not* to react to stimulus, is itself another form of radical degeneration" (*TI*, V: 2). This passage is an explanation of how the will functions in the slave/priest class mentioned in the previous chapter. Nietzsche explains that the priest, being the most life-denying form element in the slave class, finds himself incapable of resisting his instincts and desires. This kind of

weak-willed person is in actuality the most lascivious, in that they are completely incapable of suppressing their desires on their own. For this reason the slave class, via the ascetic priest, must employ the use of radical moral ideas that suppress their desires using self-denial, self-sacrifice, and self-discipline. Nietzsche criticizes the weak-willed human being and the moral systems and ideals that were built on top of them. In contrast to weakness of the will, strong will is a great virtue according to Nietzsche.

Nietzsche attributes sovereign individuals with a strength of will that seems to include some capacity for agency, or the ability to choose and direct one's actions. The capacity described in Nietzsche's philosophical work on the strong will seems inconsistent with his earlier ideas on the absence of a human capacity for freewill. Nietzsche describes a human being with a strong will as having the ability to systematize and order their instincts. He states that the strong willed person's impulses and desires are coordinated "under a single predominate impulse" (*WP*, 46). Thus, Nietzsche admits to some belief in a ruling instinct that has the ability to coordinate and control a person's instincts, desires, and passions. According to Nietzsche, the ability to "*not* react to stimulus, but to take in hand the inhibiting, isolating instincts" is the primary attribute of a strong willed person. For Nietzsche, "the most important thing about it [strength of will] is precisely *not* to 'will', to be *able* to defer decision" (*TI*, VIII: 6). The primary attribute of Nietzsche's strong-willed person is their ability to withhold decisions and control their instincts when approached with enticing or frightening stimuli. This ability to control one's passions seems to necessitate some quality like agency or freedom. However, instead of attributing this ability to control and coordinate one's impulses to a singular and unified agent, Nietzsche makes this capacity an impulse among impulses

that has the strength to rule the others. In this schema, Nietzsche places the ability to control oneself into a determined framework; perhaps only those who are determined to have such a capacity are able to develop his or her strength of will? Regardless, the belief in a capacity for human agency absolutely exists in Nietzsche's philosophical work. He goes further than just recognizing the existence of such a capacity, and interestingly dictates that human beings are responsible for developing their characters and strong wills.

The second place where Nietzsche expresses some belief in a form of agency can be found in his reflection on "how one becomes what one is" in *Ecce Homo*. In evaluating the development of a sovereign individual, Nietzsche states, "meanwhile the organizing 'idea' that is destined to rule keeps growing deep down--it begins to command; slowly it leads us *back* from side roads and wrong roads; it prepares *single* qualities and fitnesses that will one day prove to be indispensable as means toward a whole--one by one, it trains all subservient capacities before giving any hint of the dominant task, 'goal,' 'aim,' or 'meaning'" (*EH*, Why I Am So Clever 9). In this passage exist two important themes that are inherent to Nietzsche's thought on freedom. He describes a certain quality that grows naturally inside of a person. This quality is determined to grow inside of a person, due to their nature, character, and circumstances. However, the quality also has a capacity to command, which necessitates the assumption that there is some type of agency that can grow within a person that can siphon and direct one's actions. This quality is further explained in Nietzsche's philosophical work on the will

The third place in which Nietzsche seems to hold some conception of agency can be found in one of his most famous passages on the development of individual character. In the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche famously states, "to 'give style' to one's character--a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan ... "(*GS*, 290). In this aphorism Nietzsche calls for sovereign individuals to individualize and stylize their characters by the means of enhancing good characteristics and learning to accept and reinterpret weak characteristics as beneficial. In reference to Nietzsche's position on freewill and determinism, this passage demonstrates his belief that though human beings have a determined set of natural abilities, we are able to freely develop and strengthen our characters within a determined framework. This important concept points to some concept of agency within Nietzsche's philosophy.

Some Nietzsche scholars view these passages as pointing to the idea that human beings are personally responsible for developing their characters. Nietzsche's own words demonstrate that he has some belief that human beings, or some dominating instinct that lies within human beings, have some power to control, direct, and foster other traits. Because of this concept of self-making, Nietzsche can be read as an existentialist. Nietzsche scholar, Robert Solomon, supports this proposal and suggests, "like existentialists such as Soren Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre, Nietzsche is a powerful defender of what one might call the 'existential self,' the individual who 'makes himself' by exploring and disciplining his particular talents and distinguishes himself from 'the herd' and the conformist influences of other people" (Solomon, 63). This passage is indicative of Nietzsche's call to "give style to one's character," as well as his critique of

those who have the inability to *not* react to stimulus. Solomon goes on to suggest that Nietzsche's concept of fatalism is compatible with the existentialist's doctrine of self making. He also suggests that, "Nietzsche, like Sartre, is a staunch believer in personal responsibility for what one becomes" (Solomon, 64). The validity of Solomon's compatabilist position will be discussed in the next chapter, but his concept is useful in introducing Nietzsche's work on personal responsibility and freedom.

The majority of Nietzsche's thought on responsibility is critical. In chapter two, we saw Nietzsche critiquing the Judeo-Christian notion of moral responsibility, in that it promotes life denying concepts. For Nietzsche, morality uses the notion of responsibility in order to inflict guilt and bad conscience onto human beings. He more specifically describes moral responsibility as a tool used by the ascetic priest in order to control, tame, and weaken the slave and master classes, alike. Nietzsche claims that "people were thought of as 'free' so that they could be judged and punished—so that they could become *guilty*" (*TI*, VI: 7). In this passage, freewill is diagnosed as the primary culprit in making human beings responsible for their actions. This portrait of freewill characterizes Nietzsche as highly critical of responsibility and the effects that it has on human beings. However, in discussing the origins of responsibility, Nietzsche describes responsibility as having arisen from negative circumstances but resulting in a positive effect on human beings.

At the beginning of the Second Treatise in the Genealogy of Morality, Nietzsche outlines the process in which the concept of responsibility developed. At the very beginning of the treatise he states, "To breed an animal *with the right to make promises*— is not this the paradoxical task that nature has set itself in the case of man? Is it not the

real problem regarding man?" (*GM*, II: 1). From the very beginning of this aphorism Nietzsche is suggesting that there exists an essential paradox in regard to the idea of responsibility. Though so much of his critique of Christianity is dedicated to declaring the moral concept of responsibility as life-denying, here Nietzsche is opening up his interpretation of the ability to be responsible through making promises.

Nietzsche discusses the development of responsibility in a historical sense in the *Genealogy of Morality*. He tracks this development as growing out of the social necessity to make human beings responsible for their actions. He first pictures man in a masterly form of *robust* health. This human being has the capacity to actively forget, making this individual a healthy and clean slate of irresponsibility (*GM*, II: 1). Next, Nietzsche proposes that human beings bred into their character the capacity for memory. He suggests that the way in which human beings created the ability to remember and promise is through inflicting pain upon themselves and others. He states that, "if something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which ceases to *hurt* stays in the memory" (*GM*, II: 3). Later in the same aphorism, he suggests that asceticism utilizes the infliction of pain in order to produce memory, in that asceticism encourages self-sacrifice and discipline in order to constantly remind people of their sins and indebting them forever to God. Nietzsche describes memory and willing as "an active *desire* not to rid oneself, a desire for the continuance of something desired once, a real *memory of the will*" (*GM*, II: 1). For Nietzsche the ability to will, which was discussed in the previous chapters as a psychological phenomenon rather than an actual capacity, has developed out of human beings having the ability to retain concepts and have a memory of their feelings and actions. Memory and willing ultimately serve a social function in that they

make humans *calculable, regular and necessary*. In order for humans to think in terms of the future, and make promises, they must be able to view their actions as caused by passed actions. The concept of freewill necessitates human beings having a memory of their actions in order to promote moral responsibility. Nietzsche's critique of the process of creating memory and responsibility in human beings is two-sided. He uses the same mechanism to critique the concept of moral responsibility in the Judeo-Christian sense and praise the capacity for responsibility in his concept of the sovereign individual. Nietzsche describes the process which brought about the creation of his concept of the sovereign individual in the following passage:

> If we place ourselves at the end of this tremendous process, where the tree at last brings forth fruit, where society and the morality of custom at last reveal *what* they have simply been the means to: then we discover that the ripest fruit is the *sovereign individual*, like only to himself, liberated again from morality of custom, autonomous and supramoral"

This passage describes how past moral practices and ideals gave rise to the possibility for what Nietzsche considers sovereignty. Here, he views all of the problematic and incorrect concepts that make up metaphysical and moral ideals instrumental in leading up to the development of the sovereign individual. In the next chapter we will discuss how the sovereign individual arose from this process and attempt to come to a conclusion about how Nietzsche's conception of fatalism and his belief in the human capacity for freedom are compatible.

Chapter Four:

Nietzsche's philosophical work on freewill and determinism is enigmatic due to seeming inconsistencies in his thought. He offers a devastating critique of freewill in both the metaphysical and moral senses. In addition to his critique of freewill, Nietzsche also rejects atomistic determinism. Both freewill and determinism are criticized by Nietzsche because they appeal to metaphysical ideals that result in life-denying consequences. In the case of freewill, Nietzsche is critical of the metaphysical assumptions that make up one's conception of a "self," or "I". According to Nietzsche, the metaphysical assumptions built into the concept of freewill have been used by Judeo-Christian culture in order to inflict moral responsibility onto human beings. However, Nietzsche's rejections of freewill and determinism have been significantly complicated by his notion of sovereignty. Throughout Nietzsche's philosophical work, he offers an affirmative project in addition to his negative critique. This affirmative project is based on the creation of a truly sovereign, free, life-affirming individual. This individual is personified in his work through the use of the character Zarathustra, as well as actual historical examples like Goethe. By offering a new conception of freedom, or sovereignty, Nietzsche is able to break out of the metaphysical binary of freewill vs. determinism. He rejects both of these positions for their misconceptions and negative effects on human kind, and he offers a solution to the question of morality in his redeeming human being.

Nietzsche's critique of freewill and determinism, and his contribution of a sovereign and affirmative morality can be seen as a positive project that is intended to provide the necessary philosophical framework for the emergence of a life-affirming and sovereign human being. However, Nietzsche does not extend the privilege of obtaining

sovereignty and life-affirmation to everyone. He is clear that sovereignty is reserved for those who posses the correct disposition. He states, "independence is for the few; it is a privilege of the strong" (*BGE*, 29). Though Nietzsche only extends the possibility for sovereignty to a few, his prolonged critique of freewill and determinism coupled with his elation at the possibility of a new conception of a truly sovereign man guide his work. For Nietzsche, the sovereign human being encapsulates a "richness in personality, abundance in oneself, overflowing and bestowing, instinctive good health and affirmation of oneself, that produce great sacrifice and great love" (*WP*, 388). Whether Nietzsche reserves the capability for life-affirmation and sovereignty for the few or extends the possibility to a larger portion of the world, the potential for this kind of sovereignty and revaluation of the world is a worthwhile project. It might be argued that Nietzsche actually is enacting sovereignty through his philosophical works, although he never admits to being sovereign himself. However, he might be seen as forging the necessary framework and conditions for the emergence of the redeeming human being. In speaking of the creation of this life-affirming individual, Nietzsche states that, "the lifetime of a single man signifies virtually nothing in relation to the accomplishment of such protracted tasks and aims, the very first thing to be done is the rearing of a new kind of man, in whom the duration of the necessary will and the necessary instinct will be guaranteed through many generations" (*WP*, 957). The actual creation or even outline of the sovereign individual seems to be beyond Nietzsche's philosophical project, however, his place seems to be in clearing the way for the creation of such beings. Nietzsche's critique of morality can be seen as an attempt "to prepare a *reversal of values* for a certain strong kind of man of the highest spirituality and strength of will and to this end

slowly and cautiously to unfetter a host of instincts now kept in check and calumniated" (*WP*, 957). This passage describes the task of critiquing moral value systems, such as Christianity, as Nietzsche's role in preparing the necessary philosophical framework for the emergence of a truly sovereign individual. For Nietzsche this is the task of the people he considers "free spirits," individuals who have come to reject life-denying values systems and so can see the potential for life-affirmation in a redeeming human being who will exist in the future.

Nietzsche's positive project anticipates the advent of an individual who is truly sovereign and life-affirming. This creature is called by many different names in Nietzsche's philosophical works. Zarathustra and Goethe are frequently invoked as instances of this type of individual, while he or she is also called a higher type, the sovereign individual, the redeeming man, and the *Übermensch*. I will use these terms interchangeably where appropriate. Nietzsche describes the coming of this new kind of sovereignty in his speculation of the emergence of the redeeming man. He states, "in a stronger age than this decaying, self-doubting present, he must come to us, the *redeeming* man of great love and contempt, the creative spirit whose compelling strength will not let him rest in any aloofness or any beyond" (*GM*, II: 24). With this statement Nietzsche calls for the coming of a new stage in human history. This redeeming individual is not bound up in the metaphysical notions that drove the creation of the metaphysical concepts that make up our understandings of freewill and determinism. Sovereignty is Nietzsche's path out of the nihilism and decadence that has resulted from the historical development of morality. He explains that this individual "whose isolation is misunderstood by the people as if it were a flight from reality—while it is only his

absorption, immersion, penetration into reality, so that, when he one day emerges again into the light, he may bring home the redemption of this reality" (*GM*, II: 24). Here, Nietzsche explains that this sovereign being functions outside of our current everyday conceptions of reality. In fact, the sovereign individual belongs to an age in which one's reality is perceived in a radically different way from how it was previously conceived. However, Nietzsche's project should not be seen as an attempt to instill a metaphysical tradition with a conception of reality to replace those ideals that sprung forth from Judeo-Christianity. Nietzsche's development of his philosophical conception of sovereignty ought to be seen as transformative, in that it is an attempt to force one to re-conceptualize and therefore revalue previous moral norms. Nietzsche's primary tool for inspiring a revaluation of moral values is will to power.

The concept of will to power is the underlying thought that guides both Nietzsche's negative critique of freewill and the creation of his affirmative morality that includes the concept of sovereignty. Using his term will to power, Nietzsche defines the activity and forces that exist in the world as being a result of competing power relationships. He depicts the world as "a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back, with tremendous years of recurrence, with an ebb and a flood of its forms" (*WP*, 1067). As mentioned in chapter one, Nietzsche rejects the conception of human will as being derived from a singular and unified subject. He views the act of willing as being constructed of many "'under-wills' or under-souls—for our body is merely a social construct of many souls" (*BGE*, 19). This depiction of willing as a social construction of power relationships is an essential feature in the idea of

sovereignty. The ability to attain life-affirmation and sovereignty necessitates an ordering of one's instincts, drives, and wills.

Nietzsche's concept of individual sovereignty is seated in the ability of human beings to command their instincts. Though he rejects the idea of a singular and unified self that directs one's actions, with respect to individuals actions he believes human beings have some ability to direct and command their actions. This can be seen in his meditation on education and learning in *Twilight of the Idols*. In this passage, Nietzsche states, "learning to *see*, as I understand it, is almost what is called in unphilosophical language 'strong will': the most important thing about it is precisely not to 'will', to be able to defer decision. Every lack of intellectuality, every vulgarity is based on the inability to resist stimulus" (*TI*, VIII: 6). This inability to resist stimulus is one of the primary weaknesses of human will. The slave class, according to Nietzsche, does not have the ability to control their instincts themselves, and therefore has to find that control in an external force, namely, in God. Unlike the metaphysical framework developed by the slave class, Nietzsche suggests that command of one's instincts and desires comes from a multiplicity of internal forces and not a singular entity such as the "self" or God. Nietzsche insists that "our organism is an oligarchy," or a multiplicity of competing forces that can be ranked. This conception of the human will as a diverse amalgamation of competing drives and instincts presents an interesting conception of freewill in Nietzsche's thought.

The idea that human action is made up of the interplay between competing instincts separates Nietzsche's ideas about sovereignty from the classical conception of freewill. However, the belief that there are greater instincts commanding the rest of one's

desires seems to allude to some form of autonomous agency within one's competing drives. The idea that humans have commanding instincts is reiterated in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In this text, Nietzsche uses the character of Zarathustra to voice the concept that "whatever lives obeys. . . . He who cannot obey is commanded. That is the nature of the living" (*TSZ*, II "On Self Overcoming"). Here Nietzsche demonstrates his belief that all human beings, by virtue of being alive, must obey some form of law or value system. According to Nietzsche, in order truly to become a life-affirming individual, one must have the ability to command and control one's instincts. It is important to remember, however, that Nietzsche rejects any form of a singular and unified soul/self/I that could be seen as the agent enacting commands. In his essay "Return of the Master," Richard White analyzes the idea of commanding instincts in Nietzsche's work, and their relevance to the sovereign individual. White explains Nietzsche's thought on sovereignty and commanding instincts in the following terms: "whatever is capable of directing itself as a specific individual must always place itself under the constraints of values and ideals. . . . This is how 'life' itself progresses: it projects these goals and ideals beyond itself, and by inspiring the striving of the individual it thereby achieves its own self-overcoming" (White). Here, Nietzsche is depicted as the antithesis of the commonplace misconception of him as a nihilist. In fact, he is insisting that values and ideals can drive human beings toward achieving higher forms of life. He is critical of a specific mode of living: slave morality. He rejects slave morality because it is a life-denying moral system that was created by weak-willed people with the inability to command their instincts and drives. Nietzsche extends his critique of those who are unable to command their own instincts to directly criticizing Christianity and its articles of faith. He explains, "faith is

always coveted most and needed most urgently where will is lacking; for will, as the effect of command, is the decisive sign of sovereignty and strength" (*GS*, 347). Nietzsche's cumulative affirmative project strives towards the eventual replacement Judeo-Christian moral values with an unspoken affirmative morality, which at its basis revolves around the concept of will to power.

Although Nietzsche explains will to power as the underlying mechanism and positive force that drives actions in the world, will to power can manifest in affirmative and negating forms. The possibility of humans attaining sovereignty is the result of the historical development of the concept of the will. In the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche guides us through the development, destruction, and reaffirmation of the will in human beings. The master class is the first to emerge on the scene with a life-affirming will, which causes them to exert their strength and oppress the slave class. The master's will to life and power is utterly healthy and life-affirming but unintelligible. In opposition to the master class, the slave class harbors a weakness of will caused by their extreme suffering. Their misery and eventual resentment causes them to create a moral system that encourages life-denial. However, the slaves' will to life is not altogether depleted. Within the slave class, the priestly types are able to salvage the slaves' will to life, although only to the smallest degree. The priestly class has the strength of will that allows them to create an escape from suffering in otherworldly ideals for the slave class. Nietzsche explains that "it was only in the hands of the priest, that artist in guilt feelings, that it achieved form" (*GM*, III: 20). The priests are creative and sovereign spirits, in that they possess a strong and organized will, however, their sickened and weak natural dispositions cause them to create a life-denying morality that promotes self-sacrifice and

suffering. This drive toward life-denial is characterized in Nietzsche's work as "*a will to nothingness*, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental presupposition of life; but it remains a *will*! . . . man would rather will *nothingness* than *not* will" (*GM*, III: 28). According to Nietzsche, slave morality salvaged the potential for the emergence of a sovereign and life-affirming human being by preserving the will to stay alive in the slave class. Judeo-Christian morality provided an ideology to counter the extreme suffering of the slave class, thus keeping the slave class from merely killing themselves. Nietzsche indicates that "one should guard against forming a low opinion of this entire phenomenon just because it is ugly and painful from the outset. After all, the active force that is at work... [is] namely that *instinct for freedom* (speaking in my language: the will to power)" (*GM*, II: 18). Nietzsche is able to translate the slave's will to life, or staying alive in the face of extreme suffering, as preserving enough of the human will to provide the necessary conditions for a truly sovereign and life-affirming individual. Although, in the case of the slave class, their will to life manifests itself in life-denial and decay, this historical circumstance actually results in the anticipation of a redeeming human being. In speaking of the emergence of a redeeming and life-affirming human, Nietzsche insists that "we think that this has happened every time under the opposite conditions, that to this end the dangerousness of his situation must first grow to the point of enormity, his power of invention and stimulation (his "spirit") had to develop under prolonged pressure and constraint into refinement and audacity, his life-will had to be enhanced into an unconditional power-will" (*BGE*, 44). According to Nietzsche, it is through oppression of the life-denying characteristics of slave morality, such as the moral concept of freewill,

paired with the preservation of human beings will to life that will lead to the development of a sovereign and life-affirming individual.

In addition to salvaging the will to power for human beings, slave morality also serves as a mechanism for making human beings intelligible and inserts meaning into their lives. In commenting on the horrifying effects slave morality has had on life-affirmation, Nietzsche insists that "in spite of all this—man was *rescued* by it, he had a *meaning*, he was hence forth no longer like a leaf in the wind, a plaything of nonsense, "without-sense," now he could *will* something—no matter for the moment in what direction, to what end, with what he willed: *the will itself was saved* (*GM*, III: 28). In this passage, Nietzsche describes how slave morality was useful in that it has inserted meaning and intelligibility into the previously strong, yet unintelligent, master class. For Nietzsche, man was made intelligent through the process of creating a memory in him. The development of human beings' capacity to remember has two functions; it has served to inflict moral responsibility onto human beings as well as providing the necessary criteria for the emergence of a truly sovereign and life-affirming individual.

The relationship between memory and forgetfulness is essential in understanding Nietzsche's sovereign individual. Forgetfulness appears to be a positive trait belonging to the master class and an essential feature of life-affirmation. The act of forgetting is a "positive force" in Nietzsche's philosophical thought. To have the ability to actively forget one's experiences allows "the consciousness to make room for new things, above all the nobler functions and functionaries, for regulation, foresight, premeditation (for our organism is an oligarchy)—that is the purpose of active forgetfulness" (*GM*, II: 1). In this passage, Nietzsche describes the active force of forgetting as a positive attribute. It can be

easily depicted as an essential feature of the master class, and one of the primary components that lead to life-affirmation. Without having developed the capability to remember, humans cannot be held responsible for their past actions.

It is therefore no surprise that Nietzsche's praise of the human capacity for forgetfulness is closely followed by a critique of the creation of memory in human beings. He suggests that within this great beast with the power to forget, was bred the capacity to promise. Man has created within himself a memory of the will, which allows him to remember and therefore become responsible for his actions. According to Nietzsche, this process of breeding a man with memory and the ability to make promises makes humans *calculable*, *regular*, and *necessary* (*GM*, I: 1). Here, memory can be seen as a tool used by the slave class in order to inflict judgment and punishment onto others by making human beings culpable for their actions.

For Nietzsche, this ability to be held responsible for one's actions evolved directly out of moral responsibility created by the religious concept of freewill. In the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche describes his sovereign character as an animal bred "*with the right to make promises*" (*GM*, II: 1). According to Nietzsche, in order for human beings to gain the ability to make promises, they must first acquire a memory for past events. Nietzsche depicts pre-promising human beings as robust beasts who are forgetful. Forgetfulness is an active force in these human beings, which allows them to escape being held responsible for past actions. This healthy form of forgetfulness is indicative of the master class, described in Nietzsche's origins of slave morality. Nietzsche hypothesizes that this trait of forgetfulness was lost with the rise of the slave class. Nietzsche claims that the capacity for memory was bred into human beings through a

painful and torturous process. He claims that "if something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to *hurt* stays in the memory" (*GM*, II: 3). This process of torture and the infliction of memory can be understood as a mechanism for placing moral responsibility onto individuals. The metaphysical notions that create human beings as singular and unified selves are enhanced by the creation of memory in the human conscience. Having understood oneself as an autonomous individual, the capacity for memory allows responsibility for ones actions. As seen in chapter two of this thesis, Nietzsche forcefully critiques freewill for its infliction of moral responsibility on to human beings. This critique of memory's role in moral responsibility is typical of Nietzsche's philosophical arguments against Christian thought; however, Nietzsche introduces a new character who has the potential for sovereignty and life-affirmation in the *Genealogy of Morals*. The sovereign individual, who is a point of much controversy in current Nietzsche scholarship, plays an important role in creating a path towards life-affirmation in Nietzsche's thought.

Nietzsche introduces the sovereign individual as the product of the historical development of the master and slave classes. He is highly critical of the slave class and their effect on human kind; however, he seems to attribute some potential for being otherwise in the sovereign individual. The development of this new and compelling character is outlined in the following passage:

> If we place ourselves at the end of this tremendous process, where the tree at last brings forth fruit, where society and morality of custom at last reveal *what* they have simply been the means to: there we discover the ripest fruit is the *sovereign individual*, like only to himself, liberated against the morality of custom, autonomous and supramoral (for "autonomous" and "moral" are mutually exclusive), in short the man who has his own independent, protracted will and the *right to make promises*— (*GM*, II: 2).

At first glance the sovereign individual mentioned in this passage, seems to encapsulate Nietzsche's concept of a higher or redeeming human being that will come to rid the world of slave morality, and teach life-affirmation. However, the sovereign individual of *GM*, II: 2 cannot be easily placed into the category of Übermensch or Zarathustra. Although this sovereign mentioned by Nietzsche at the beginning of the "Second Treatise" of the *Genealogy of Morals* might seem reminiscent of a new, higher, and life-affirming individual, there is a considerable amount of agreement in current Nietzsche scholarship that this sovereign individual is in fact closer to being a slave moralist than a life-affirmer. Numerous influential Nietzsche scholars agree that the sovereign individual cannot be equated with Nietzsche's redeeming human being.

Lawrence Hatab and Christa Davis Acampora have in conjunction offered a compelling thesis that would separate the sovereign individual mentioned in *GM*, II: 2 from other conceptions of higher types of human beings mentioned elsewhere in Nietzsche's work. One of the major problems that plagues Nietzsche's sovereign individual is this character's relationship with fate. The sovereign individual is depicted as having "the extraordinary privilege of *responsibility*, the consciousness of this rare freedom, this power over oneself and over fate" (*GM*, II: 2). This passage suggests that the sovereign individual is somehow a master of his own fate. This is directly at odds with passages that depict Nietzsche as a fatalist, such as, "the individual is a piece of fate from top to bottom, one more law, one more necessity for all that is to come and will be: (*TI*, IV: 6). This inconsistency is one of the central problems that face categorizations of Nietzsche's sovereign individual in current philosophical scholarship on subject.

Acampora suggests that one of the central problems with reading the sovereign individual in common with a redeeming human being has been caused by a mistranslation of Nietzsche's thought. She suggests that rendering "*das versprechen darf*" as "with the right to make promises" has encouraged those who rely on the translation to think that Nietzsche sees promise-making as an entitlement that one must earn or which one is granted, and which presumably stands in contrast with something to which one might be inherently obliged" (Acampora, 148). Instead Acampora opts for a more literal translation of the phrase in question as beings "who are permitted to promise." This alleviates some of the tendency to see the sovereign individual as a purely autonomous character. Both Hatab and Acampora depict Nietzsche's sovereign individual in a new sense. Hatab argues that the sovereign individual mentioned at the beginning of the Second Treatise is "more in line with the modernist notion of liberation of custom and tradition" (Hatab, 3). Also, Hatab insists that this sovereign individual is better understood as having a Kantian form of autonomy, which would consider moral custom and autonomy inconsistent with each other. This new understanding of the sovereign individual has had a significant effect on Nietzsche scholarship, and has impacted how we are able to think of sovereignty in Nietzsche's work. If sovereignty does not exist in Nietzsche's philosophical work as once thought, the burden of discovering Nietzsche's unique philosophical position between freewill theorist and determinist translates into the task of salvaging and creating a deeper understanding of Nietzsche's concept of sovereignty or freedom.

The argument that the sovereign individual in *GM* II: 2 cannot be equated with Nietzsche's conception of the redeeming human being is a compelling and widely

accepted thesis in current Nietzsche scholarship. However, understanding the sovereign individual as the modern notion of a liberal individual poses serious problems for understanding the role of responsibility in Nietzsche's philosophical work. It is unlikely that Nietzsche's critique of memory and responsibility should be understood as the promotion of the idea of returning to a master-like morality. Also, Nietzsche seems to demonstrate some belief in a positive form of individual responsibility in his explanation of commanding instincts. Instead of dismissing the sovereign individual as yet another manifestation of slave morality, I propose that the sovereign individual is a necessary step in the ascension of humanity towards life-affirmation and sovereignty. The capacity for memory and responsibility are important facets of the redeeming human being, or Übermensch, and are necessary for the acceptance of eternal recurrence.

Attaining life-affirmation and freedom includes the acceptance of Nietzsche's concept of eternal recurrence. This concept can be described as a willingness to affirm all that is good and bad in one's life, in a commitment to live one's life over again exactly as it was. This concept is introduced in the *Gay Science* in the following passage:

> *The greatest weight*—What if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into you loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it, you will have to live it once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence— (*GS*, 341).

For the true life-affirmer, Nietzsche suggests that the fictional demon's proposition will be a pleasant message. Acknowledging the idea that the world works in repetitive cycles and affirming one's life is an essential feature of the redeeming individual. Nietzsche's advocacy of eternal recurrence is directly derived from his ontological view of the world as will to power. Using his term will to power, Nietzsche defines the activities and forces

that exist in the world as being a result of power relationships. He describes the interplay of the world's power relationships as "blessing itself, as that which must return eternally, as becoming that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness; this is my *Dionysian* world of the eternally self-creating, the self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my 'beyond good and evil'" (*WP*, 1067). In the very last line of *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche describes the world as will to power, and nothing more. This depiction of the world as constantly in a state of flux and change and Nietzsche's commitment to the acceptance of eternal return as a necessary criterion for achieving life-affirmation are essential features of his redeeming human being.

At this point it is necessary to return to the scholarly debate surrounding the sovereign individual in order to decipher what can be learned about Nietzsche's redeeming individual and this character's relationship with eternal recurrence. In reference to the active force of forgetting in *GM*, II: 1, Christa Davis Acampora suggests that Nietzsche's sovereign individual is inconsistent in that it has developed a life-denying force of remembrance in place of forgetting. Though Nietzsche does praise the ability to forget, Nietzsche also clearly suggests that human beings must move forward through the nihilistic concepts produced by slave morality, in order to achieve life-affirmation and accept eternal return. In the essay, "Finding the *Übermensch"* in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, Paul Loeb suggests that attaining the ability to remember one's actions and have some responsibility over one's actions are essential features of Nietzsche's redeeming human being. This does not suggest that the sovereign individual mentioned in the "Second Treatise" of the Genealogy of Morals is in fact a

redeeming human; however, Loeb manages to salvage some of the modern liberal notions of sovereignty as being important in the process of attaining life affirmation.

Although moral conceptions of freewill have led to the creation of moral responsibility so vehemently criticized by Nietzsche, it is possible that having some memory of one's actions and responsibility are an important rung on the ladder towards becoming a life-affirming individual. The sovereign individual plays a major role in preparing individuals for attaining life-affirmation and sovereignty through the acceptance of eternal return. For Nietzsche, obtaining memory of all that was good and bad in one's life is necessary for being able to affirm all the happenings of one's life. Loeb suggests that in the case of the sovereign individual, in its modern liberal notion, the faculty of memory has anchored human beings to their pasts. He speaks of the historical events that belong to one's past as the "it was," and this memory of what has happened in one's life lends itself towards reading one's past as unchangeable and the cause of present and future circumstances. With the doctrine of eternal recurrence, Nietzsche seeks to unanchor human beings from being atomistically determined by their pasts through affirmation. Lobe suggests that, "the human animal must therefore use its memory to recover the past so thoroughly that it recognizes that time actually circles back upon itself and that the 'it was' always returns" (Loeb, 166). It is through this ability to accept eternal return that certain kinds of individuals are capable of attaining freedom, sovereignty, and life-affirmation.

The concepts of sovereignty and life-affirmation are epitomized in Nietzsche's portrayal of Zarathustra. Paul Loeb suggests that this character is capable of achieving sovereignty due to his capacity for both forgetfulness and memory. It is through

Zarathustra's ability to forget that he is able to transcend and free himself from his past, while it is his capacity for remembering that allows him to acknowledge the world as eternally recurring. Understanding one's life as a cyclical relation of eternal return allows Zarathustra to transcend the present, and understand his actions and will as influencing his future, present and past (Loeb, 170). Loeb states that Zarathustra's "recurrence-memory shows him that his eternally returning past also lies *ahead* of his present and is therefore just as open to his will's influence as is his future" (Loeb, 171). If Loeb's interpretation of Nietzsche is correct, the capacity for sovereignty lies in the escape from metaphysical binaries that have previously bound human kind. By letting go of conceptions of one's life as completely determined by past events one is able to overcome the past, while accepting the events of one's life as eternally recurring allows an individual to actively release his or her will to power in a way that shapes the future.

The acceptance of the concept of eternal recurrence is an essential feature of Nietzsche's truly sovereign and life affirming human being. Although the sovereign individual described in *GM*, II: 2 is likely indicative of a Kantian notion of modern liberalized freedom, the features of memory and responsibility are intrinsic to one's capability to accept eternal recurrence and affirm life. Loeb is able to resolve some of the problems faced by Acampora's and Hatab's interpretation of the sovereign individual by articulating the function of eternal recurrence in Nietzsche's thought. Through eternal recurrence, responsibility and memory gain purpose in regard to Nietzsche's life-affirming and redeeming human being. In addition to demonstrating the role of responsibility in Nietzsche's conception of sovereignty, Robert Solomon contributes to

scholarship on the subject by analyzing Nietzsche's commitment to fatalism and "self-making," or sovereignty.

In "Nietzsche on Fatalism and 'Freewill,'" Robert Solomon attempts to reconcile similar seeming inconsistencies in Nietzsche's work. He does this by depicting Nietzsche as a classical fatalist, Nietzsche escapes problems raised by Kantian or determinist readings of his work. Solomon proposes that "Nietzsche's fatalism and Nietzsche's "self-making" are ultimately two sides of the same coin and not at odds or contradictory" (Solomon, 63). For Solomon, the tension between human capacity for sovereignty and the fact that people are inevitably determined by their surroundings is not an astounding paradox but just a necessary condition of human life. Solomon does believe that Nietzsche criticizes freewill based on a blaming perspective that accompanies strict conceptions of unified agents and their agencies (Solomon, 65). In Solomon's evaluation of Nietzsche's thought, he explores the opportunity for understanding the possibility of freedom, creation, or even "self-making," in terms of fatalism.

Fatalism, though sometimes understood in a religious context, is ultimately a commitment to the idea that all that happens in the world happens out of necessity and could not have happened otherwise. The concept of fatalism differs from determinism, in that it does not distinguish a specific cause, or group of causes, for every effect. Solomon considers Nietzsche's fatalism as an "*aesthetic* thesis, one that has more to do with a literary narrative than with scientific truth" (Solomon, 66). Fatalism lacks the forward-looking element of predicting distinct causes of human actions and therefore escapes the atomistic critique of classical determinism. By not prescribing the outlines for future causes and effects, Solomon attempts to marry the concepts of fatalism and sovereignty

in Nietzsche thought. He describes this by "alluding to one of Nietzsche's better known bits of euphoria that we are more like the oarsmen of our fate, capable of heroic self-movement but also swept along in an often cruel but glorious sea" (Solomon, 69). This passage raises the possibility that one can be fated, yet still have an active role in their movement through life. One of Solomon's most important points has to do with the agent that is taking the active role in being responsible for one's life.

Responsibility and "self-making" are recurring themes in Nietzsche scholarship on the subject of freedom and sovereignty. Solomon briefly points out the potential for understanding Nietzsche's thought on human actions as a form of "agentless agency," meaning that a human being's actions come from a multiplicity of internal and external forces and not one singular entity. This process seems to square nicely with Nietzsche's critique of the metaphysical notions that surround freewill. In addition to self-making, Robert Solomon also contributes to the notion of sovereignty in Nietzsche's thought. Though Solomon admits that Nietzsche offers a problematic take on responsibility, he believes that Nietzsche, like other existentialist thinkers, considers human beings responsible for their talents, skills and desires (Solomon, 83). Solomon's existentialist reading of Nietzsche's concept of sovereignty is a valuable contribution, but perhaps an incomplete depiction of the role of sovereignty and responsibility in Nietzsche's philosophical works.

Current scholarship on the concept of sovereignty in Nietzsche's thought is diverse and varied. All of the scholars mentioned in this chapter have made important contributions toward understanding Nietzsche's concept of sovereignty and the redeeming human being. Most importantly it is apparent that the role of freedom in

Nietzsche's affirmative morality cannot be easily pinned down. Like a dream or a ghost the sovereign individual lies in the future of humanity and is just out of grasp of current philosophical frameworks like freewill and determinism.

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The initial aim of this thesis was to discover Nietzsche's precarious and unique position between freewill theorist and determinist. Nietzsche's philosophical work and his concept of sovereignty, however, do not lend themselves to mediating these metaphysical binaries on human agency. Instead, sovereignty eludes classification and is a departure from the philosophical frameworks of freewill or determinism. In order to be similar to freewill, Nietzsche's conception of sovereignty would have to have some stable and unified subject that could be seen as the initiating actions. However, Nietzsche rejects the idea that this is the case, most noticeably in his admission that there is no "doer" behind a "deed". Nietzsche offers a very different conception about the driving forces that guide action in the world with his concept of will to power. The concept of will to power also serves to separate Nietzsche's position from that of classical determinism. Instead of identifying specific causes that determine human action, Nietzsche conceptualizes the world as being made up of a multiplicity of competing forces that are constantly shaping and reshaping one's actions.

Although Nietzsche's ontological view could just be seen as a complicated form of determinism, his rejection of the "unfree will," in addition to his concept of commanding instincts, distinctly separates his work from being reduced to determinism.

Will to power is not conceived of merely as a homogeneous soup of instincts, drives, and passions. Will to power is oceanic in that there exist within the power relations stronger and dominating instincts, currents if you will. These commanding instincts have a guiding, creative, and sovereign role within the will to power framework. Richard White explains how these commanding instincts work by stating that, "for every impulse to do something, there are a multitude of other impulses that must be overcome if this impulse is to achieve the commandment of sovereignty. Thus willing seems to imply the essential multiplicity of the individual, as a 'community' of different souls and different impulses" (White, 132). Here, the many different and competing wills that drive one's actions are described as being ordered into an "oligarchy," where the commanding instincts organize and redirect all of the competing instincts and drives. However, one might critique these commanding instincts as not being sovereign, or free at all. For in fact, they too are part of one's biological, psychological, and social framework in Nietzsche's thought. Criticizing these instincts as not being truly sovereign, or free, is inaccurate because it reduces Nietzsche's thought back down into the freewill versus determinism binary which he so successfully critiques. Sovereignty encompasses the possession of a strong will that uses commanding instincts in order to direct one's actions.

Attaining this kind of strong will, whether reducible to a biological predisposition or not, is directly related to the acceptance of Nietzsche's concept of eternal recurrence. This "great cultivating idea" is the basis for attaining life-affirmation and becoming sovereign (*WP*, 1056). Richard White explains that the role of commanding instincts and the capacity to direct and order one's thoughts and actions is depicted in Nietzsche's work through the character of Zarathustra. In fact, "Zarathustra affirms the self-

legislation of sovereignty as the highest expression of life, for those incapable of self-appropriation and inner constraint are forever dependent upon the commandments and values of others" (White, 126). This character, which can be seen as an illustration of the redeeming individual or Übermensch in Nietzsche's work, is capable of controlling and directing his actions for the purpose of accepting eternal return and thus affirming his past, present, and future. Having the ability to command one's instincts, or else having a commanding and life-affirming instinct that overrides weaker instincts is essential in the acceptance of eternal recurrence. Nietzsche's affirmative morality insists that "life commands a continual self-overcoming, [through eternal recurrence] but only that which commands itself adequately responds to the commandment given" (White, 126). In describing another example of a truly sovereign and life-affirming individual in the person of Goethe, Nietzsche states: "such a *liberated* spirit stands in the midst of the universe with a joyful and trusting fatalism, with *faith* in the fact that only what is individual is reprehensible, that everything is redeemed and affirmed in the whole—*he no longer denies*" (*TI*, IX: 49). This passage describes the sovereign relation to eternal recurrence. In learning to affirm life one is liberated from external bonds like morality. Having the ability to command one's instincts and the acceptance of eternal recurrence places individuals in a unique and sovereign position in reference to the creation and revaluation of value systems.

In summary, Nietzsche escapes the bonds of modern metaphysical conceptions of freewill and determinism by beginning with an ontological view of reality as will to power. This understanding of the will to power allows for a form of agency in one's commanding instincts, but it is ultimately an "agentless agency" because there is no

singular and unified subject that can be identified as a cause of action. Sovereignty in this form cannot be reduced down to a common manifestation of freewill because according to Nietzsche the purpose of the moral notion of freewill was to place judgment and guilt onto human beings. Conceiving of the world as will to power does not allow for the conception of "self," or "I," while still allowing for individual actions, which are a result of competing drives and impulses. One of the most important features about having the ability to command and order one's instincts is that one is driven to accept the idea of eternal recurrence. This notion that all that has happened will repeat itself and the affirmation of this possibility is an important feature in attaining both sovereignty and life-affirmation.

The true acceptance and affirmation of all that exists in the world places Nietzsche's redeeming individuals in a truly sovereign position. By affirming all the events of one's existence, including life-denying aspects such as slave morality, one is no longer bound by the moral values and metaphysical notions that once guided human thought and action. The development of Nietzsche's sovereign and affirmative morality is for the purpose of making individuals sovereign, who are liberated by the fact that they control and create their own values. In recollecting this aspect of the truly sovereign and life-affirming individual, Nietzsche states, "now it is 'outlived,' the dangerous and uncanny point has been reached where the greater, more manifold, more comprehensive life transcends and *lives beyond* the old morality; the 'individual appears, obliged to give himself laws and to develop his own arts and wiles for self preservation, self-enhancement, self redemption" (*BGE*, 262). This ability to transcend moral norms by affirming life and creating one's own values is the essential component of sovereignty.

Although sovereignty is not a universally attainable goal, and one which one must have a preexisting disposition to achieve, Nietzsche's conception of sovereignty cannot be reduced down to determinism. This could easily be done by admitting that one's commanding instincts are biologically, psychologically, and socially determined; however, this would be a gross misunderstanding and reductive interpretation of Nietzsche's project. This is because "Nietzsche is not doing metaphysics . . . [but is instead] unearthing the valuations of ourselves that underlie our inclining to a certain metaphysical position" (Janaway, 348). Nietzsche's project does not involve sorting out metaphysical conceptions of the world; in fact he rejects freewill and determinism as valueless in that they are false conceptions that produce life-denying consequences. His project is aimed at creating the necessary conditions in which human life can flourish by creating life-affirming value systems. He calls out: "Let us therefore *limit* ourselves to the purification of our opinions and valuations and to the *creation of our new tables of what is good*, and let us stop brooding about the 'moral value of our actions'! . . . We, however, *want to become those we are*—human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves" (*BGE*, 335). Sovereignty, in the Nietzschean sense, is being liberated from the bonds of moral systems based on metaphysical untruths for the purpose of weakening humanity and creating values that benefit and affirm life. Sovereignty is found in the ability to revalue current values systems. Being driven by will to power, the truly sovereign individual constantly creates, demolishes, and re-creates her life and the world around her.

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Reference Key to Writings by Nietzsche

D *Daybreak*, 1881.

GS *The Gay Science*, 1882.

TSZ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1883-5.

BGE *Beyond Good and Evil*, 1886.

GM *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 1887.

TI *The Twilight of the Idols*, 1889.

WP *The Will to Power*, 1901.

EH *Ecce Homo*, 1908.